

Strength

by Tiny.Bear

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Summary: Yuki is a very young girl who is determined to protect what is important to her. She is willing to do whatever it takes to spend her life accomplishing this. Even giving up her responsibilities, childhood and her gender. "Stay strong, not as a man but just as you are." Rated T for violence.

1. Chapter 1

Disclaimer: I do not own Hakuoki or its characters. I own my own characters and that is all. :)

Enjoy, rate & review.

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><p>Chapter 1 -<p>

The girl runs towards the older man yelling a battle cry. He can tell she has been training with the spear. She attempts to swing at him, which he easily dodges. When she attempts a second time he allows the spear to come close to his face before grabbing it and tearing it out of her small hands. He throws it to the ground and with his anger rising he slaps her.

"You cannot become a samurai!"

"I will Father!"

"You will not! Your role in this family is to marry a man of wealth and good standing. Why else would God have given you such beauty?!"

"I don't care! I will never give up!"

"So long as you are a girl and living under my roof you will!"

The young 10 year old girl stands up while nursing her red cheek. She soaks in her father's words. Wondering just how strong her resolution truly is. She narrows her large hazel eyes and looks to the blue sky for its clarity.

She remembers the rogue ronin attacking her home last year. Seeking revenge on her father. She recalls the feeling of helplessness as her mother lay bleeding to death. How determined her big brother's amber eyes grew. How he trains so hard to get everything right so our family will not be caught by surprise again. How she shares that same determination but feels weak because of her gender. It doesn't matter that her brother is secretly training her. He always says her headstrong nature will be the death of her. In spite of that she knows this overwhelming feeling in her heart will not and cannot be contained and caged. She wants to do whatever it takes to protect whats important.

The girl gracefully strides to her fallen spear. She bends and picks it up and walks back to her father with a look of determination and defiance. She stops about 6 feet from him and points her spear at him.

"So be it. I will leave you and this cursed beauty behind. I want none of it."

With one swift movement she grabs her waist length bright red hair and allows the spear to slice through it. The long hair her father had forbidden her to cut. It was uneven and its longest points came just past her jawline. Her eyes glared at her father with a new found strength.

"Father wait!"

A young boy of 13 with long red hair comes running and places a protective arm around the girl.

"If Yuki leaves, I will also."

Yuki tucks a loose strand of her hair behind her ear and looks up at her brother. She knows they are closer than most siblings but she never expected him to leave his life behind.

"Sanosuke..."

"Very well Yuki. If you wish to be treated as a boy then so be it. I will not tolerate any crying or whining. This is the life you chose now you must deal with its trials."

"Yes father." Yuki says in shock.

"You can start by cleaning out your things. I expect to have 2 sons by the end of the day. I want no reminder of there being a girl in our home."

Yuki turns on her heel and starts running to the nearby house. She cannot contain the silly grin spread across her face.

I can hardly believe father agreed! It cant be that hard to fake being a boy. I just have to learn how to pee standing up.

Sanosuke sighs and allows a small smile to creep to his face. _Yuki has no idea what she is in for._

"Sanosuke, You will not baby her."

"..."

He cannot promise his father. He can only watch as Yuki retreats back to the house. He wonders for a moment which grin she is wearing. He dearly loves his little sister. He has nothing but determination to protect her. If treating her as a boy will keep her by his side then he shall do just that.

* * *

><p>Author's Notes.<p>

Hello :)

>Just a heads up this story does take place quite a few years before the Shinsengumi. I could have done a whole flashback thing but I felt it lacked the true essence of Yuki's character. So it will be quite awhile before she meets the shinsengumi. The stories I tell in this story are purely stories. Lol. I can only guess about how Sanosuke met with the others and how they all formed together. Also some of the times they had. So please do not take to heart the stories or memories created in this space. They are fictional to the fictional story spun from the historical story of the Shinsengumi. :)<p>

2. Chapter 2

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><p>Chapter 2<p>

..Sanosuke POV..

I woke up to Yuki on the floor. She had moved out of her room and into mine for a "manly experience." Also to free up her room for a house maid for our family. Father said Yuki wouldn't prepare meals anymore. I see she is taking advantage of the extra sleep. She somehow managed to roll herself off her tatami mat. Her blanket was tangled in her legs. Her face was lost in her pillow. All I can see is her fiery bright red hair and a trail of drool.

Your already looking like a boy, little sister.

I left a small laugh escape from my lips as I turn to leave the room. I slide the door gently behind me and make my way to the kitchen. I see father has already left and blessed us with instructions on the table.

Sons,

_I have gone to town to pick up our house attendant. We will be back this evening before dinner. Get some fish from the river.

—
_Sanosuke, _

_Start Yuki's proper training. For a secret trainer your pupil has the worst upper strength I have ever seen. Start her on laps around the grounds to build endurance. The same training you received. Starting tomorrow I have volunteered you 2 to help the farmer up the street. Don't go easy on your __**brother.**_

I can't help but laugh. Father is hoping Yuki will find it too hard and give up but what he doesn't know is she has already built her endurance. Every morning before she rises to make breakfast she goes for a run. She loves it. She says it helps her feel free. I don't know where my little sister got all the boldness and desire for freedom. Our mother was very traditional.

I hear Yuki opening the door to our room.

"Sanosuke! When do we start training?"

"After breakfast. I'm cooking. What does my little _brother_ want?"

She grins as wide as she can. "Just an apple and a good run!"

...Yuki POV...

Sanosuke lets out a hearty laugh. I'm glad I can amuse him so early in the morning.

"Father says he wants you to start training immediately. Also, tomorrow we are helping Tanaka-san on his farm. Probably some heavy lifting to build your upper strength. "

"Wow. I did not expect Father to take this so seriously."

"Of course he is taking it seriously. He thinks if he pushes you, a girl, to the limits only men can reach; you will give up."

"He doesn't know me very well then."

...Training...

"Yuki! You're slowing down! We still have 13 laps remaining!"

If I could only kill with a glare. We have already done 37 laps around the compound. Sanosuke tried to let me off easy by cutting our amount in half. I insisted he stop trying to make things easier on me. I should have kept my big mouth shut.

"Sano! Wait for me!"

...Sanosuke POV...

Father would reprimand me for slowing down and running back to her. But how can I not? I slow to her pace and watch her ragged breathing.

"Yuki, just say you give up. There are certain things only men can do and there is nothing wrong with that."

She stopped and she looked at me with hurt in her hazel eyes. I note that today they are more brown.

"I can't give up. I need to do this. I need to do whatever it takes to become a boy. I know men and women are built differently for different things. I need to find my own way to become a man though so that I can fight for the ones I love. I don't want to live my life behind a screen praying and waiting to see if you or whoever is out protecting me to come home. I want that burden of protection to fall on no ones shoulders. Especially yours. So I wont give up big brother. Please support me properly."

She starts running again and as if in a blink of her eyes her hurt brown eyes turn to a hard green. She is stubborn and driven. She is willing to give up a safe life for a dangerous one to avoid the hurt of waiting for someone to come back that might not.

Oh little sister, how young you are and yet how old you are. I will support you. No matter what happens.

"Well then Yuki you better pick up your pace. This is too slow. If an enemy were chasing you, you would be dead."

"But there is no enemy" She mischievously eyes me.

"Hmm. True."

I pull out my spear and poke her gently in the shoulder. She screams a playful scream and runs faster.

"Still not fast enough. You want me to support you then I will do so properly Yuki-_kun_."

I poke her harder. This time I wince as I draw some blood. I expect her to scold me and say stop. Instead she narrows those hazel eyes and sprints off.

She's fast.

* * *

><p>Author's notes.<p>

Sorry this chapter is on the short side. I'm just trying to build that relationship between Yuki and Sanosuke. Things will pick up a lot in the next chapter.

3. Chapter 3

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><p>Chapter 3 -<p>

...Yuki POV...

"Why are my stupid wrists still so...so...dainty looking!"

I have spent the last 4 months working on Tanaka-san's farm, running the compound and sparring with my brother. At first glance you would assume I am a boy. My hair has reached my shoulders but I am cutting it now to my chin. My hands are calloused and my arms are anything but thin. My height as a girl was a burden but as a boy the taller I am the more convincing I am. I need to get as much growing in as I can, for in a few years I'll stop. My life as a girl is over but my life as a boy is a challenge everyday.

I step away from the mirror and look outside. I see Mai-san, our cook, and Sanosuke carrying back supplies from the store. Winter is coming so she wanted to make a bigger trip then she normally does in case she cannot go because of snowfall. She is a woman about my fathers age. She is beautiful and so graceful. Her long black hair is always tied back so neatly in a bun. And she always wears such beautiful colours.

I put my knife down and run outside to help the two. I pass father watching them through the kitchen window. I open the front door and run towards them.

"Yuki! Come grab some of these bags!"

"I'm coming Sanosuke!"

I take the things Mai-san is carrying to free her hands. She claps her hands together and blows on them.

"Thank you Yuki-kun. Winter just likes to creep up on us doesn't it boys?"

"Yes Ma'am" Brother and I say in unison.

"Well I'm going to walk ahead to start preparing supper. Thank you again boys"

We both smile in return. Sanosuke shifts his things and clears his throat.

"Don't look surprised or act strangely but I don't trust her Yuki."

I want to yell "why?" but I can see Mai-san and father talking through the kitchen window. So I whisper, "Why big bro?"

"I'm not sure yet little sis. Just keep your eyes open."

I look at Mai-san talking and laughing with my father. What does Sanosuke see that I don't?

...That Evening...

"Sanosuke! Yuki! Its snowing!"

Sanosuke and I run out to the front door after hearing father calling us.

"The first snowfall..." I hear Mai-san whisper.

"Mai-san, I didn't know you liked the snow so much." I comment.

"Oh yes Yuki-kun. The snow is wonderful. We should all build snowmen together tomorrow morning! I'll prepare a nice warm breakfast made for kings!" Mai-san exclaimed.

"Well we should get ready for bed then boys. Tomorrow is a new season bringing lots of change."

"Yes father." Sanosuke and I say together. I'm about to turn to the bathroom when Sanosuke grabs my arm and brings me to our bedroom.

"Yuki, you must whisper. I think Mai-san is planning something for tonight."

"Oh brother! Don't be so paranoid. Mai-san is a nice lady who has taken very good care of us the past spring and summer." I walk to get my change of clothes and head to the bathroom. I don't bother to look back at Sanosuke. Why would Mai-san do anything to any of us? We are her family.

I change into my night clothes and walk to the kitchen. As I turn the corner I see father preparing tea.

"Just like your mother. You always need a cup of tea before bed to help you sleep."

We smile at each other, "I didn't know that about her father."

"Yuki, I am proud of you. Your determination is greater than any man's. I want you to know that."

"Thank you father."

He sets a cup of tea down in front of me and kisses my forehead. Before he leaves he turns around and says to me, "Even boys keep their hair long nowadays Yuki. Don't be afraid to grow it out."

All I hear is the sound of his laughter as he turns into bed. I touch my hair and smile.

A little length can't hurt.

I finish my tea and put my cup in the sink. Everyone is in bed already. Such an early night for everyone. Must be the cold. I pull my sweater closer to myself and head back to my room. When I get there I see Sanosuke is already asleep.

_He must be mad at me. I'll apologize in the morning. _

I turn the light off and cuddle into my pillow and fall fast asleep.

...A few hours later...

"Yuki! Yuki! Wake up! There is a fire!"

I open my eyes and see Sanosuke standing above me. I smell smoke and the house feels unusually warm.

"Sanosuke whats going on?"

"There is a fire. Come on, we need to get father!"

He grabs my hand and pulls me out of the room. The fire is consuming our home. Everything is burning. I see our photos of mom and our childhood photos. They are already engulfed in flames.

"This time we WILL get Harada!"

"There is someone in the house. Quick Yuki get back in the bedroom!"

"What about father?"

Sanosuke doesnt answer me. He pushes me into the bedroom and goes to a floorboard near his bed. He lifts it up and bring out two carry cases.

"I knew something would happen tonight. Here is yours. Whatever happens stay with me Yuki. I'll get us out of here."

"What about father!?"

"Yuki, father warned me this would happen and he told me to not worry about him. His fate has been decided and he must atone for past sins. He said the most important thing is for me to get you out of here."

I want to cry. I want to sit on the floor and cry. How can I leave my father?

"Yuki, be strong. Please. We need to get out of here now."

He grabs my hand and pulls me to my feet.

"We need to get to father's room. There is a passage he built after last years incident for us to escape safely into the trees. Stay low and close to me. Breathe in my sweater more than the smoke Yuki. Follow my lead little brother." Sanosuke winks at me and pulls me close.

_Brother. Thats right I'm his brother not his sister. Now is not the time to act like a helpless girl. I need to man up and follow my fathers wishes. _

"Where are his kids!"

"I'd like to get my hands on his daughter!"

"Too bad I don't have a daughter! I have 2 brave sons who are not this house anymore!"

"Thats our cue Yuki! Run!"

Sanosuke opens the door and swiftly runs to father's room. As we turn

around the corner I sneak a peek into the kitchen. I see father fighting against 2 other men. Mai-san is standing in the doorway and we make eye contact.

"There they are!" She screams and points at Sanosuke and I.

"Yuki hurry!"

I break out of my trance of watching men scramble to catch us and listen to my brother. I run right past him and open the door. He runs through and I slam it shut. When I turn around he has opened a small hidden door behind father's desk.

"Quick get in!"

I run through the door and look back to see Sanosuke on my heels.

"Run Yuki and don't look back. Take this. Don't drop it and just keep running!"

I do exactly as I'm told. I hear Sanosuke on my heels and then he stops. I keep running and I hear him throw something and feel the ground shake beneath me. I can hear the tunnel starting to collapse.

"Yuki just keep going!" I hear Sanosuke in the distance behind me.

Sanosuke please be right behind me.

I see the moonlight just 20 feet away. That must be my exit. I pick up my pace and sprint my way through. I find cover behind the nearest tree. I can see the house burning. I can see the men dragging my father outside. I see Mai-san next to a tall man with a scar across his face. I see everyone but Sanosuke! Too much time has passed for him to make it safely out of the tunnel. It's crumbled to nothing. I start to cry. I don't know what else there is left for me to do.

"Find those brats!"

_brats? _So they didn't catch Sanosuke. He either got caught up in the collapse of the tunnel or escaped. I see them holding father and beating him. I cry harder.

What can I do? I'm too weak. I tried so hard to fight for the right to protect them and now here I am alone while they are in danger. They protected me.

I cry so hard I bunch my fists together. I feel the small object in my hands and remember Sanosuke telling me to hold onto it. I open my hand to find a locket. I recognize it as our mother's from her pictures. I wipe my tears and open the locket. I see a picture of all 4 of us. Father, mother, Sanosuke and I. I close the locket and see an engraving on the back. I fight back more tears as I read,

Little Yuki,

_Be strong. Not as a man but as you are. _

I hear my father scream. The men have driven a sword into his shoulder. A man with a scar comes towards my father and whispers something in his ear. After he steps aside he orders a man to take my father's head. Suddenly I don't know what I'm doing but I'm running towards them. I see a spear from our sparring session and I grab it as I run. No one sees me until Mai-san has intercepted my spear with a sword.

"Oh Yuki. I knew you were naive but this is just plain stupidity."

With one swing my spear is flying out of my hands and I'm at the tip of her sword. She is ready to drive it right through my heart when suddenly I'm running through the trees. Or I should say the man carrying me is running through the woods. I can hear the men shouting to find me getting further and further. I look at my saviour and I can only cry when I see his face.

"Big brother."

"I've got you little sister."

* * *

><p>Author's Notes:<p>

Whew! That was a long one!

End
file.